

I am writing to express my concern about the upcoming FCC rule changes regarding media ownership, currently scheduled for June 2 (proceeding 02-277).

The Bill of Rights established Freedom of Speech and Freedom of the Press as fundamental rights, essential to a functioning democracy. Our founders recognized that only by open and vigorous debate would democracy survive. Only a free and vigorous press can document and publish information necessary for citizens to make informed decisions, and ensure that public and private malfeasance is exposed to public review.

Consolidation of media ownership will inevitably lead to stifling of this free and open discourse. Large corporations are lead by individuals who may have particular biases, as exemplified by the Murdoch media. Large corporations are susceptible to commercial pressures applied by consumers remote from a local service area, leading to commercial censorship.

Similarly, without competition in a local market, the quality of the service, and especially the responsiveness of the service to local needs, will degrade. The example of Clear Channel's operation media outlets and associated cost cutting by reducing staff has already shown this effect.

I travel extensively, both in the US and abroad. I am amazed and disappointed at both the uniformity of views and the shallowness of the coverage provided by the major national networks in the US.

It is essential that information competitiveness in the media be maintained by government regulation, as otherwise market forces will lead to consolidation and local monopolies. This is especially critical for broadcast media and cable access.

For these reasons, I urge the FCC NOT to permit greater consolidation of media ownership in a local area.

Sincerely,  
Paul Wermer